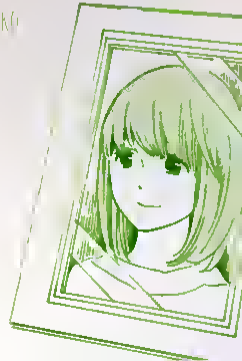
こいいじ

20

By Shimoku Kio



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Ecuador
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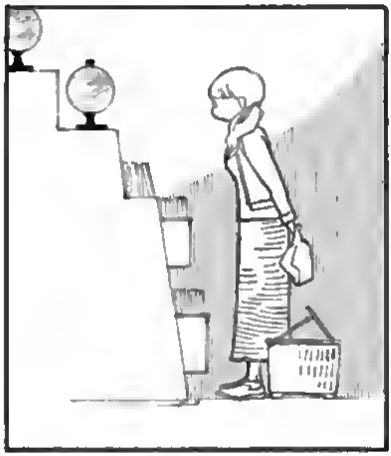
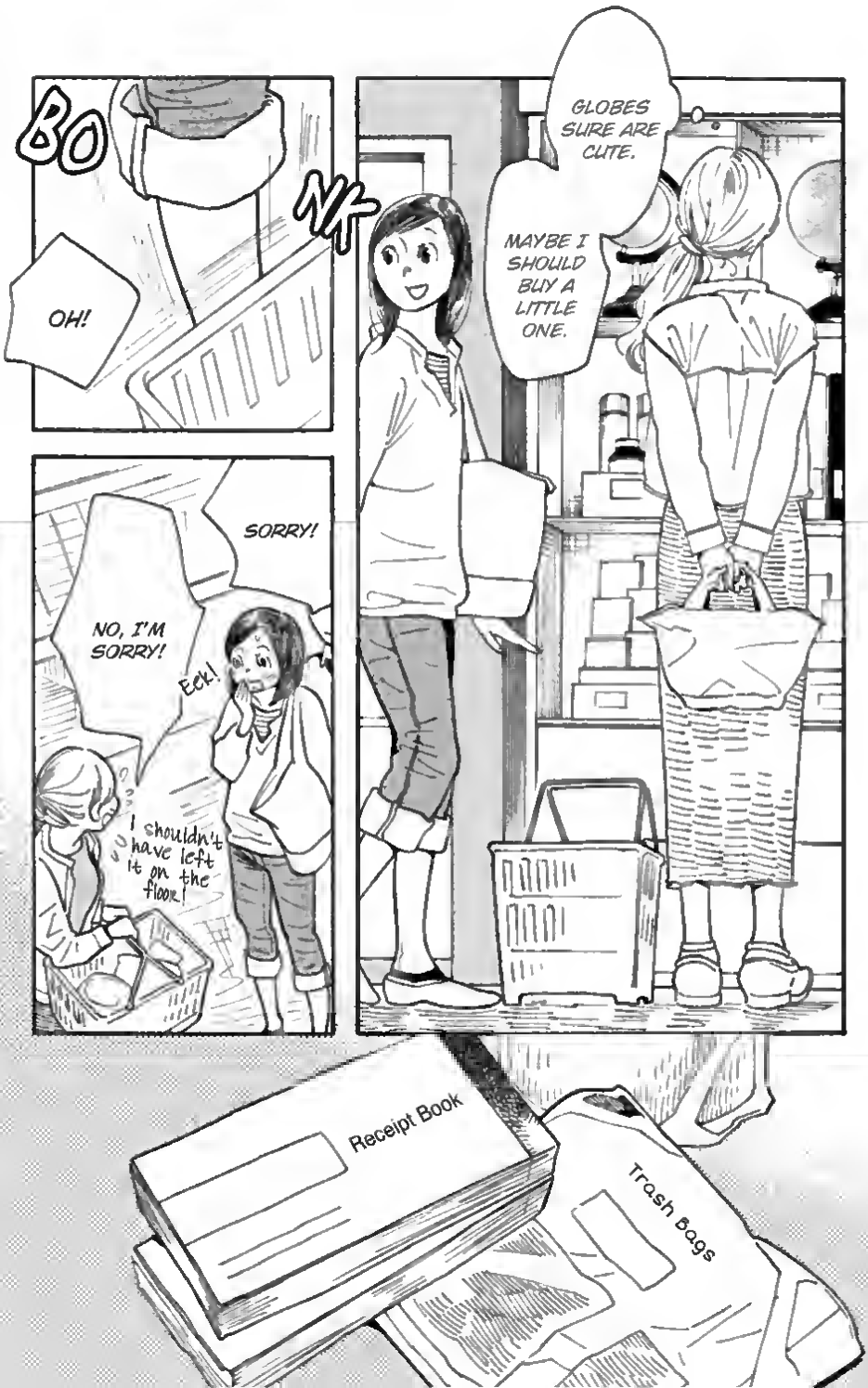


MY SISTER WENT THERE, TOO...I MEAN, SHE EVEN LIVED THERE. BUT WHAT'S THE APPEAL?
BRAZIL, HUH...?
BRAZIL
BRASILIA

八草

Vague image
Rio Amazonas
AND THEN THERE'S MY GRANDPA..
OH, THIS IS WHERE YUME IS.
BRAZIL.
The World Heritage site of Machu Picchu...
THAT'S PERU!
BRAZIL...
"WE SHOULD GO TO THE BRAZILIAN BIRD PARK TOGETHER."


BO
NK
OH!
GLOBES SURE ARE CUTE.
MAYBE I SHOULD BUY A LITTLE ONE.
SORRY!
NO, I'M SORRY!
Eek!
I shouldn't have left it on the floor!
Receipt Book
Trash Bags

I ALMOST FORGOT I WAS HERE ON AN ERRAND.
Beep
OH, I'D LIKE TO PAY FOR THIS ONE SEPARATELY ...
MIN
Mini Globe
NO PROBLEM.
I...
DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HARU-SAN
Mini Globe
MINI
WELL, I BOUGHT IT.

I NEVER MADE ANY EFFORT TO
I DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW.
THE TRUTH IS,

WHY DO I FEEL SO TERRIBLE?
I'M GOING ON A DATE WITH MAME.
ANYWAY ...
UM...
HARU-SAN WAS OLDER THAN ME.

SOUTA-KUN.
YEAH?
I LIKED THAT SHE CALLED ME THAT
SHE KIND OF HAD ME ON A LEASH,
AND THAT WAS COMFORT-ABLE.
SOUTA-KUN.
ARE YOU GONNA BE OUT LATE TONIGHT?
NOPE.
HMM.

BE CAREFUL.
AND SAY HI TO MAME-CHAN FOR ME.
I WILL.
AND I'LL BRING YOU SOMETHING HOME.
MAYBE YU CALLS ME SOUTA-KUN...
BECAUSE HARU-SAN CAN'T ANYMORE.
...OR MAYBE I'M READING TOO MUCH INTO IT.

PLANETARIUM
Flower Museum
Stars Museum
HMM...
I HAVEN'T BEEN TO THE PLANETARIUM SINCE I WAS IN JUNIOR HIGH.
YOU NEVER CAME ON A DATE WITH HARU-SAN?
NOPE.
I ALWAYS FALL ASLEEP DURING THIS SORT OF THING.

USED TO HAVE A DESK JOB.

SOU-CHAN

WAS A FORMER CLASS-MATE AND CO-WORKER.
THIS GUY
AND BEFORE THAT, HE WAS IN COLLEGE.
THEY HADN'T SEEN EACH OTHER SINCE HARU-SAN'S FUNERAL.
I'M SORRY...
FOR WHAT?
YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO CHAT FOR VERY LONG WITH ME HERE.
YEAH, BUT HE'S WITH HIS FAMILY,TOO.
HE SAID HE'LL STOP BY THE SHOP SOMETIME.

...Now let's fast-forward another season
and draw the curtain on our star tour.
Just like that, the constellations return to the same place they were the year before.
Which season's sky is your favorite?
Some say the winter sky is the most beautiful because the air is so clear.

TO WORK FOR A SOUTH-AMERICAN TRAVEL AGENCY
YOU CHOSE
BECAUSE OF YUME, DIDN'T YOU.
SAY...
I MEAN, THE SECOND TIME WE MET, YOU DIDN'T EVEN REMEMBER ME.
I remembered you, though
AFTER ALL, YOU WERE STILL DATING HER WHEN YOU APPLIED HERE.
WELL, MAYBE SO...
...YEAH.
BUT I'M JUST TRYING TO GET SOME READING DONE ON MY LUNCH BREAK HERE!
SORRY.
I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT,

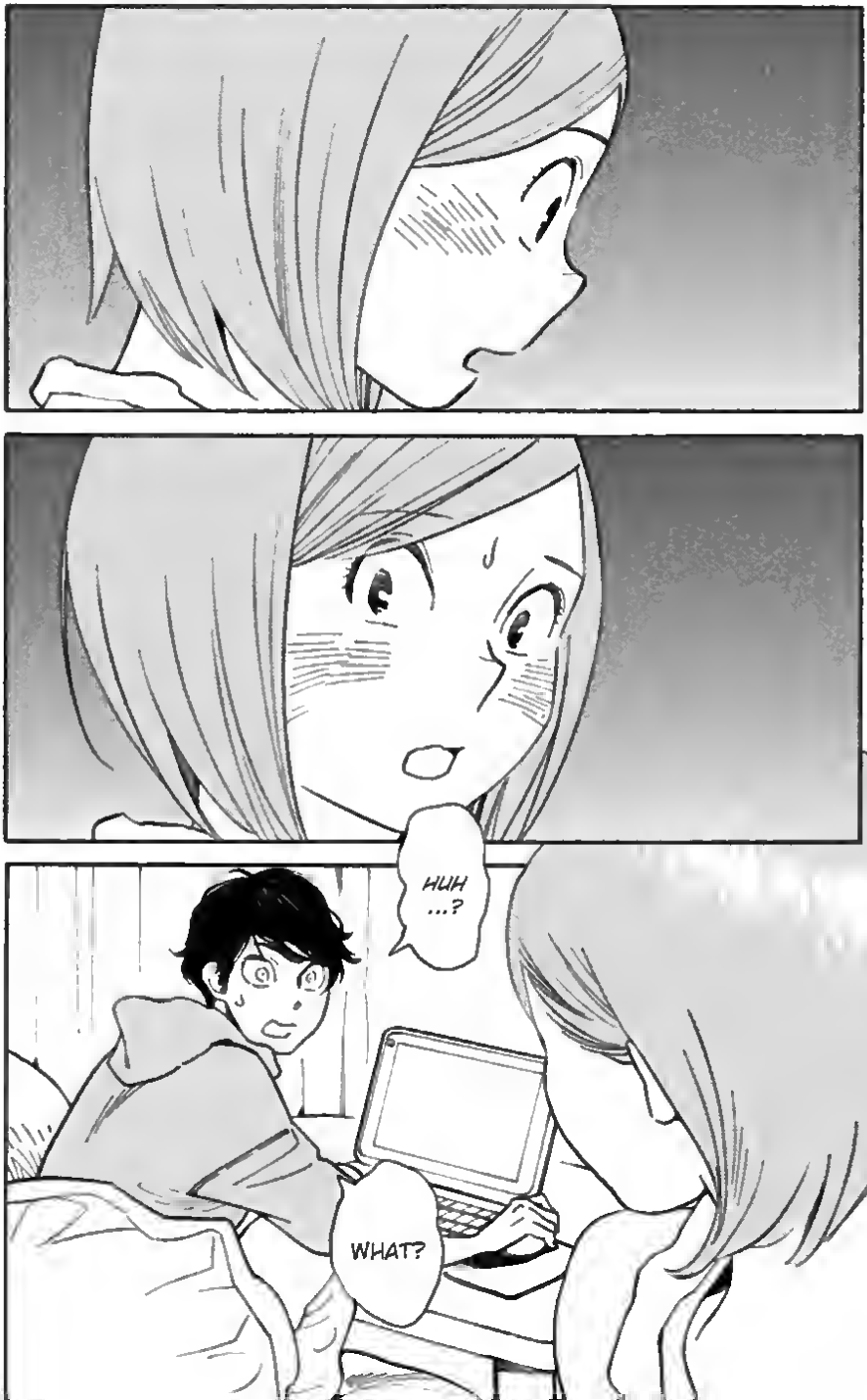
SORRY I'M SO ANNOYING.
I LIKE YOU, THOUGH, SOUTA-KUN.
BECAUSE OF YUME.
MAYBE AT FIRST.
...HUH?
brisk brisk

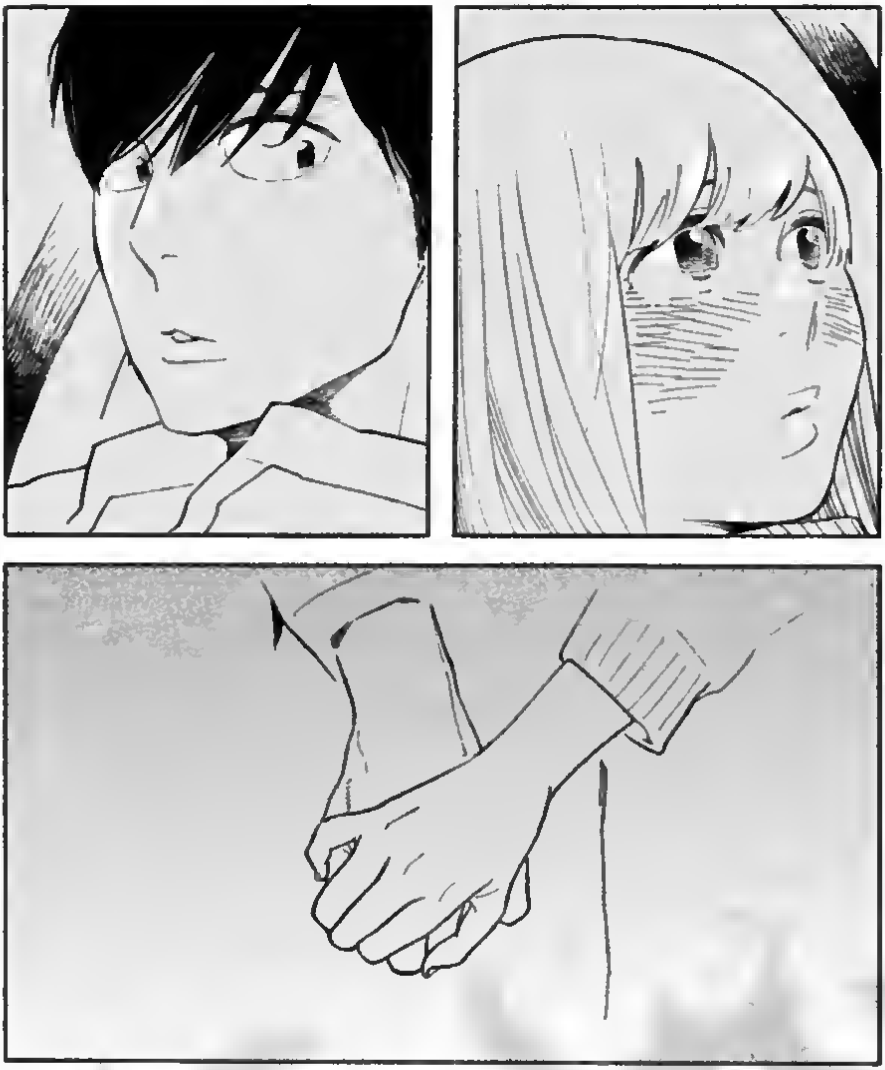
AKAI RESIDENCE.
HELLO?
OH!
Oh! Yu-chan!?
TODAY'S A HOLIDAY, SO I WAS WORRIED YOU GUYS MIGHT NOT BE HOME.
Yay! Chika-chan!
YES, YES, YES! I WANNA SEE IT!
HUH!? THE WEBSITE!?
It's still just a beta version, but...
Dance
Dance
SHE'S SO IMPATIENT.
AHAHA, SHE SAID SHE'LL BE RIGHT OVER.

HUH!?
YOU'RE ALL ALONE!?
YEP!

SOUTA-KUN'S ON A DATE WITH MAME-CHAN TODAY.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
WHAT!?

THEY'VE STARTED DATING.
WOW!

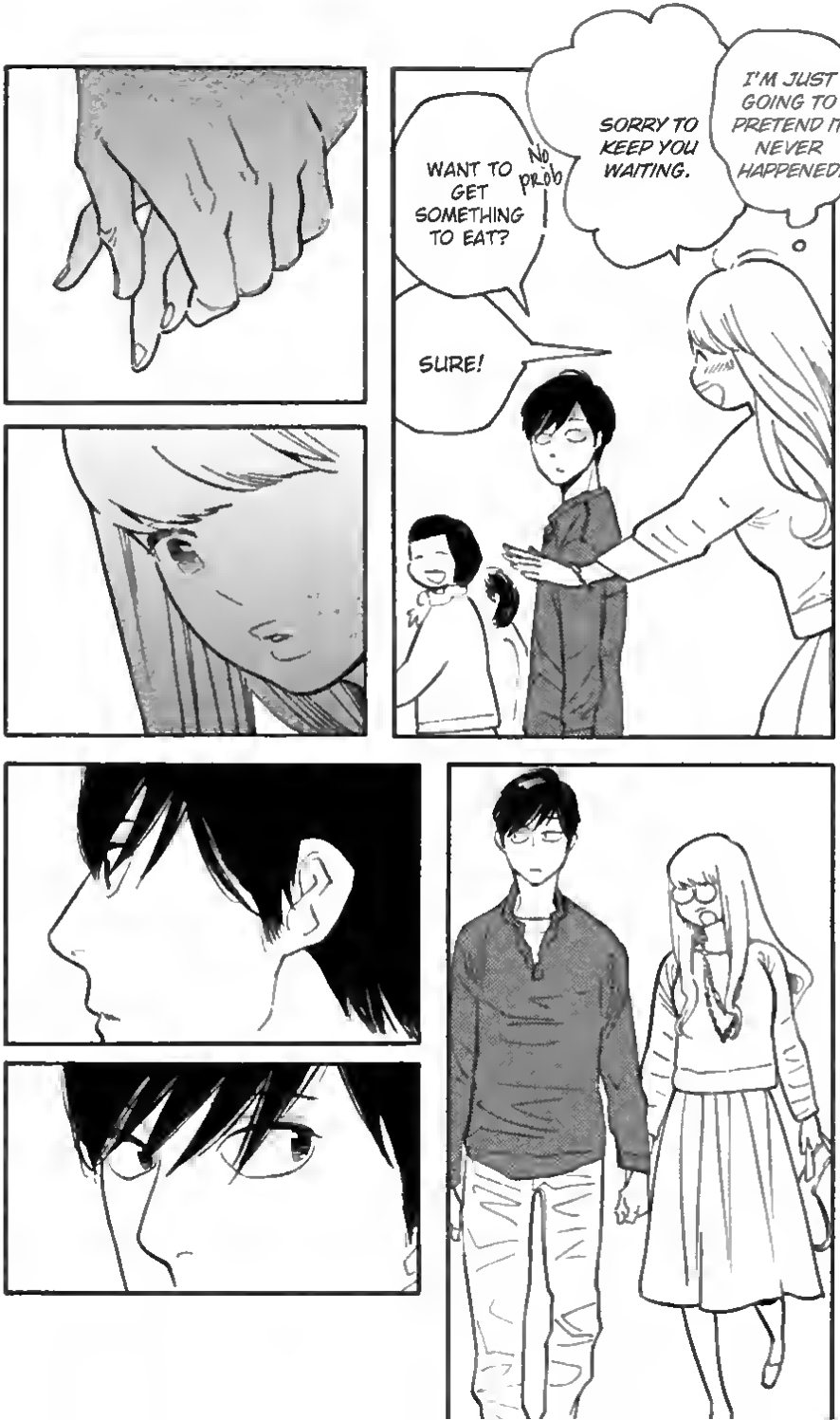

HUH ...?
WHAT?



OKAY.
I'LL BE WAITING IN THE LOBBY.
I HAVE TO USE THE REST-ROOM!
I...
Thank you.
We hope to see you again soon.
Make sure you have all your belongings.
I...
I'M SO EMBARRA-SSED
I'LL JUST PRETEND I WAS SO OVERCOME WITH EMOTION ...
I'M SO EMBARRA-SSED!
Slam

I WENT TO THE PLANETARIUM WITH TANAKA-KUN.
THAT'S SO COOL!
Squee!
Hehe
THE FIRST TIME I TOLD HIM I LIKED HIM,
I WAS IN JUNIOR HIGH.
AND THAT I GRABBED HIS HAND WITHOUT THINKING ...
I'VE ALWAYS DREAMED OF COMING HERE WITH HIM.
I MEAN, I'M OVER 30 NOW.
BUT THIS IS JUST SILLY.

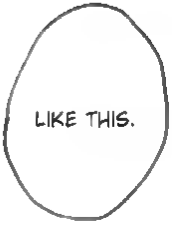
THAT CAUGHT ME OFF GUARD...
That was rude of me
BUT I GUESS I SHOULD HAVE SQUEEZED BACK...
WAH!
...!
HE'S JUST STANDING THERE STARING AT HIS HAND.
I, I'M SORRY, SOU-CHAN, I'M SUCH AN IDIOT!

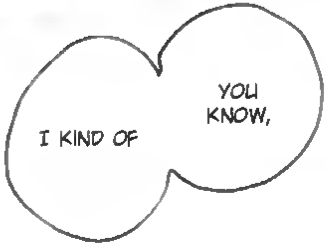

I'M JUST GOING TO PRETEND IT NEVER HAPPENED.
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING.
No prob
WANT TO GET SOMETHING TO EAT?
SURE!

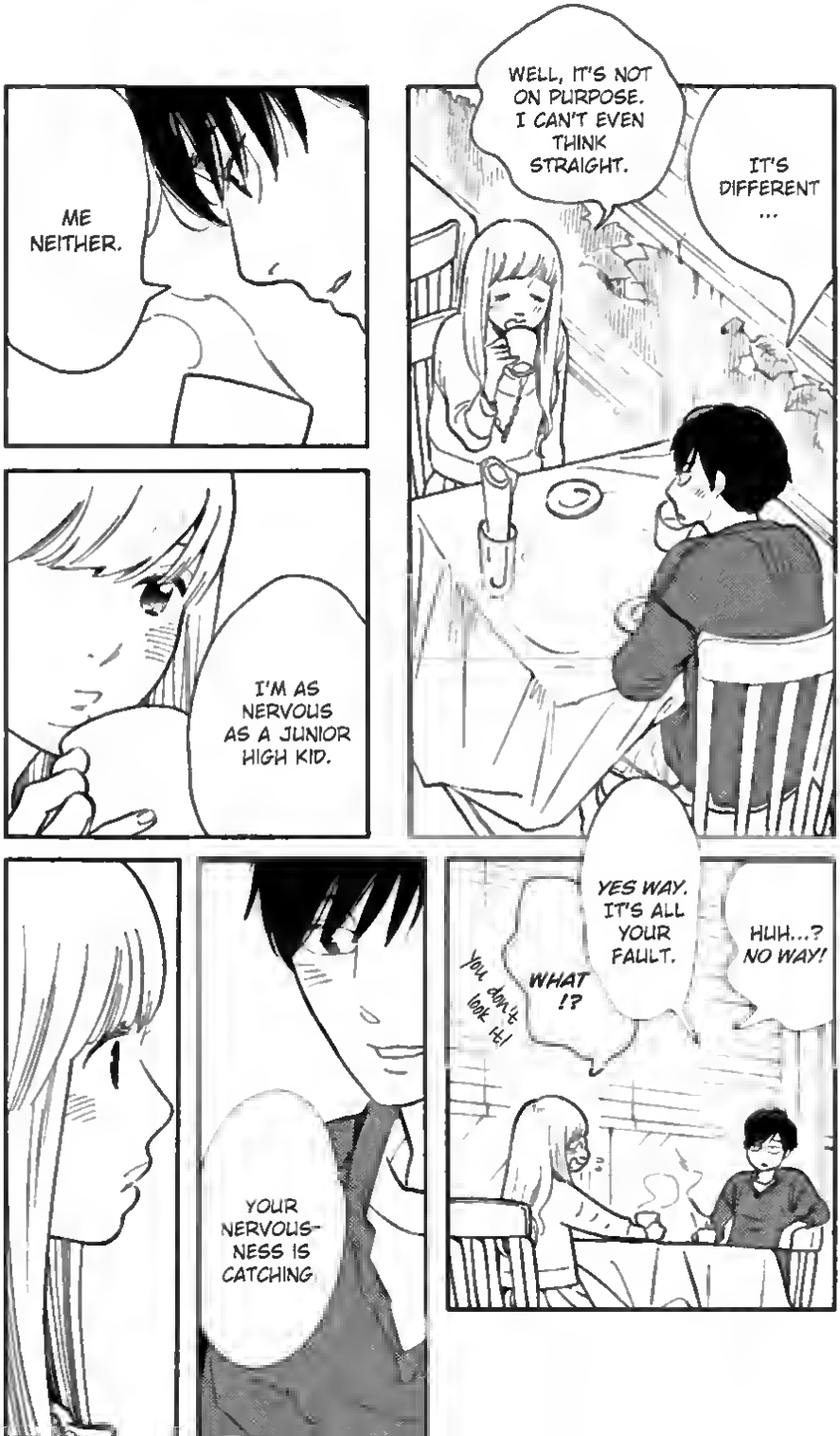
I HAVEN'T HELD HIS HAND
UH...
I DIDN'T EVEN ASK.
OH!
SORRY.
UM...
THANKS.
HIS HAND WAS COLD AND SHAKING...
BUT NOW...
IT'S SO WARM...
SINCE THAT TIME IN THE AMBULANCE WITH MY SISTER

I WAS KIND OF SURPRISED AT HOW ASSERTIVE YOU ARE, BUT NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT,
YOU DID CONFESS YOUR FEELINGS TO ME THREE TIMES, AFTER ALL...

YOU'RE PRETTY TOUGH...


LIKE THIS.

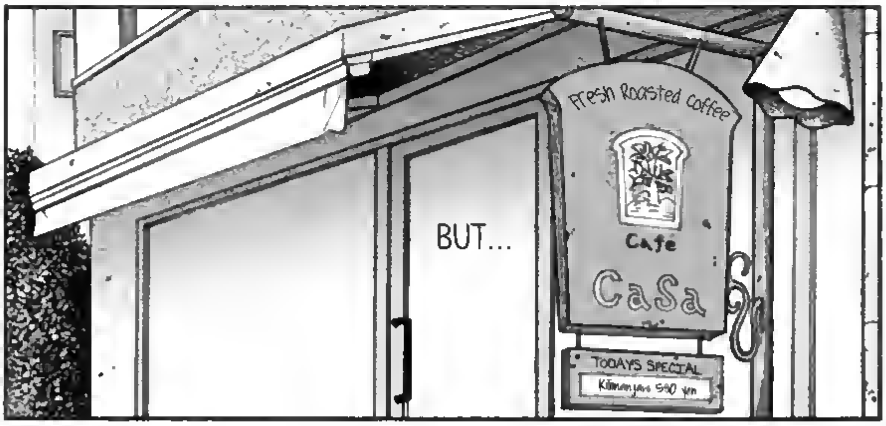

I KIND OF
YOU KNOW,


ME NEITHER.
I'M AS NERVOUS AS A JUNIOR HIGH KID.
YOUR NERVOUS-NESS IS CATCHING
WELL, IT'S NOT ON PURPOSE. I CAN'T EVEN THINK STRAIGHT.
IT'S DIFFERENT ...
YES WAY. IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.
HUH...? NO WAY!
WHAT !?
You don't look it!

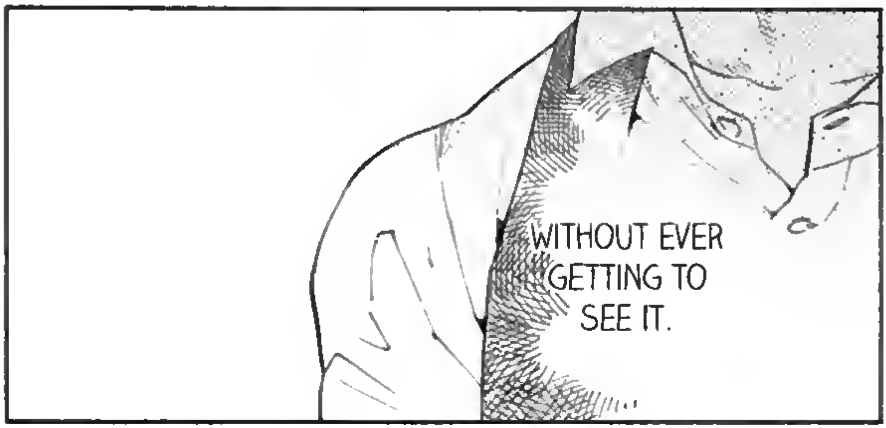
I LIKE YOU.
sputter
SOU-CHAN.
HM?
IT'S NOT THAT I'M PARTICULARLY ASSERTIVE.
BUT I CAN SAY IT BECAUSE IT'S YOU.
YOU'RE NICE, SOUTA-KUN.

YOU GAVE ME AN OPENING TO CONFESS MY FEELINGS ...
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN...?

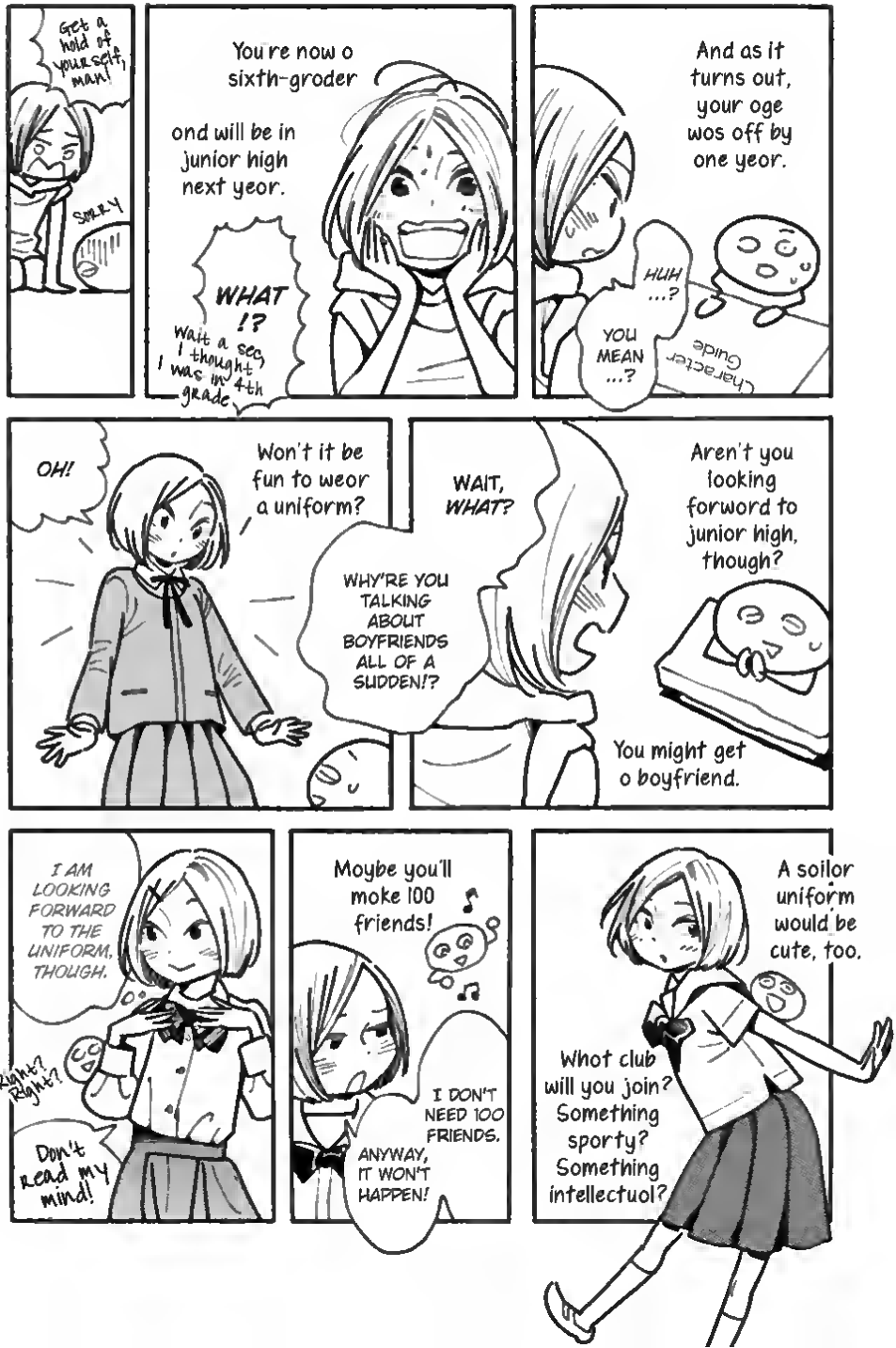
OH,
THAT'S JUST THE SORT OF PLACE.
THOUGH IT WAS MORE LIKE A HOBBY FOR MY DAD SO IT DIDN'T LAST LONG.
A LITTLE CORNER COFFEE SHOP.
AND THEN IT FINALLY CAME TRUE.
EVENTUALLY THAT BECAME OUR DREAM TOGETHER.
I WANT TO HAVE A SHOP OF MY OWN SOMEDAY.
MAYBE THAT'S THE REASON

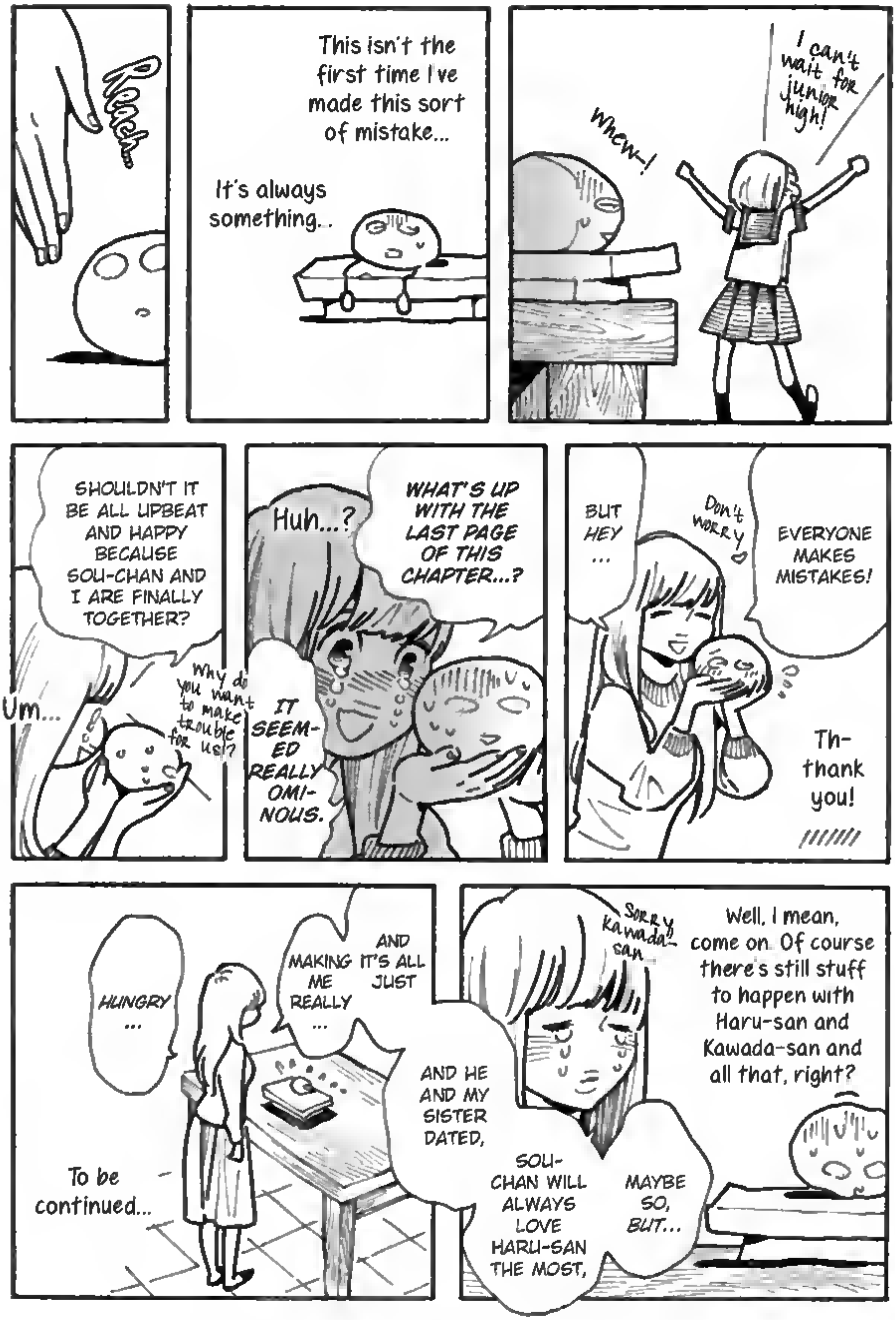

BUT...
Fresh Roasted Coffee
Cafe
CaSa
TODAYS SPECIAL

HARU-SAN
PASSED AWAY


WITHOUT EVER
GETTING TO
SEE IT.

Afterword Cafe
Owner: Shimura Takako
Koi-iji
ABOUT ME!?
It's about Yu-chon.
What? What!?
· By the way, there's something I have to..
opologize for..
Thank you for buying Koi-iji vol. 4!
When I started this series, I made a rough guide with everyone's ages and everything.
UH-HUH, UH-HUH.
Character Guide
I got your age wrong.
SPIT IT OUT.
WHAT?
Well... You see...
HUH?


Get a hold of yourself, man!
SIGH
You're now a sixth-grader and will be in junior high next year.
WHAT!?
Wait a sec, I thought I was in 4th grade
And as it turns out, your age was off by one year.
HUH...?
YOU MEAN...?
Character Guide
OH!
Won't it be fun to wear a uniform?
WAIT, WHAT?
WHY'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT BOYFRIENDS ALL OF A SUDDEN!?
Aren't you looking forward to junior high, though?
You might get a boyfriend.
I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO THE UNIFORM, THOUGH.
Right? Right?
Don't read my mind!
Maybe you'll make 100 friends!
I DON'T NEED 100 FRIENDS.
ANYWAY, IT WON'T HAPPEN!
A sailor uniform would be cute, too.
What club will you join? Something sporty? Something intellectual?


Nnnh...
This isn't the first time I've made this sort of mistake...
It's always something...
Whew-!
I can't wait for junior high!
SHOULDN'T IT BE ALL UPBEAT AND HAPPY BECAUSE SOU-CHAN AND I ARE FINALLY TOGETHER?
Um...
Why do you want to make trouble for us!?
Huh...?
WHAT'S UP WITH THE LAST PAGE OF THIS CHAPTER...?
IT SEEMED REALLY OMINOUS.
BUT HEY ...
Don't worry
EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES!
Th-thank you!
HUNGRY ...
AND IT'S ALL JUST MAKING ME REALLY ...
To be continued...
AND HE AND MY SISTER DATED,
SOU-CHAN WILL ALWAYS LOVE HARU-SAN THE MOST,
MAYBE SO, BUT...
Sorry Kawada-san
Well, I mean, come on. Of course there's still stuff to happen with Haru-san and Kawada-san and all that, right?

Thank you to O-kura-san, S-ki-san, Nawada Design Studio, my editor U-mura-san, and all my readers